

Parallel session 14: Science in daily press: a cultural question?

MEDIA COMMUNICATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND COASTAL PROTECTION: RECEPTION AND INTERPRETATIONS BY THE AUDIENCE

Harald Heinrichs and Hans Peter Peters

*Program Group Humans - Environment - Technology, Research Center
Jülich, 52425 Jülich, Germany. E-mail: h.heinrichs@fz-juelich.de,
h.p.peters@fz-juelich.de*

Abstract

Global climate change has been one of the most prominent transnational risks for the last 15 years. For most citizens the media coverage is the main source to get information about this science-based risk issue. In order to gain better understanding of the communicative and cognitive processes of media reception and interpretation, we conducted a quasi-experimental study. The results confirm studies which claim, that the impact of media coverage on the audience depend on culture-specific interpretative processes of the recipients.

Key words: Knowledge, Media, Public opinion

Text

Introduction

Global climate change and its potential consequences for example for coastal protection (sea level rise) is (at first) only accessible by scientific methods and interpretations. The development of representations about the risk mainly takes place via integrating scientific knowledge into social contexts. For most citizens the media-based public communication is an important social context to get into contact with this issue. In order to understand how citizens make use of media coverage on climate change and coastal protection this paper focuses on the following questions: Which kind of thoughts (cognitive responses) are evoked by the media coverage on climate change? To what extent do the recipients take over the perspective of the article? How are the cognitive responses influenced by recipients characteristics?

Method

At three locations at the German North Sea Coast we confronted 180 randomly chosen test readers with four articles about climate change and coastal protection. The articles discussed different aspects of the topic. The test readers were asked to comment on the articles. The cognitive responses, which were evoked by the media content, were recorded and analyzed with a coding system. Before and after presenting the stimuli articles, we collected data regarding attitudes, values and personal characteristics by questionnaire. By this design we identified interpretative patterns regarding climate change and coastal protection as well as factors guiding cognitive processes of media reception.

Results

Which kind of thoughts (cognitive responses) are evoked by the media coverage on climate change?

The cognitive responses of the test readers indicate, that the reception of media content is a highly interpretative process. The articles have evoked a broad spectrum of thoughts by the participants of the study. The cognitive responses were not only focused on aspects of climate change and/or coastal protection, but were related for example to characteristics of the medium/the author or personal dimensions. The heterogeneous thoughts can be assigned to the following categories:

- author of the article and expert quoted
- self-references (biographical, personal competence, experience and knowledge)
- personal reaction to the article (interest, surprise, trust, mistrust)
- social systems (political-administrative, science, industry) and their problem-solving capacity
- media performance
- risk (existence, acceptance, responsibility, causes, coping)

The heterogeneity of cognitive responses shows, that there is no linear and unique way of reading and understanding "media texts". Next to the general recipient-dependent selection of media coverage, there is a selection and variance of possible interpretations of the same media stimuli. How does this affect the impact of media coverage on the audience?

To what extent do the recipients take over the perspective of the article?

The results of our quasi-experimental study indicate that test reader do not take over simply the content and perspective of the media products: instead of linear message learning we observe active sense-making. That means: articles can be actively supported; articles may not provoke many thoughts, because it is not new or interesting for recipients; articles may be rejected, because the recipients do not believe or do not accept what is discussed in the media product. And the same media stimuli may evoke this range on different recipient-reactions within the audience.

The following tables demonstrate, how a stimuli article, which is skeptical on the CO₂-hypotheses and which discusses, that geological process may be responsible for climate change, evoked very different reactions.

Table 1: Verbalized thoughts of test-readers on the article and the author

	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent	No evaluation	Total
Evaluation Article / author	20 (26%)	44 (57,1%)	2 (2,6%)	11 (14,3%)	77 (100%)

Table 2: Verbalized thoughts of the test-readers on the presented expert and his statements:

	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent	No evaluation	Total
Expert quotes	16 (22,2%)	25 (34,7%)	11 (15,3%)	20 (27,8%)	72 (100%)
Expert	9 (24,3%)	20 (54,1%)	2 (5,4%)	6 (16,2%)	37 (100%)

This results show, that recipients do not take over simply the message of the article. Instead, different readers express different thoughts on the same stimuli. But which factors influence this variety in cognitive responses?

How are the cognitive responses influenced by recipients characteristics?

The interpretative reception of media content points to the fact, that characteristics of the recipients are important for the understanding of media impact. As we have shown in the tables, the article on the CO-2-hypotheses obviously evoked critical thoughts by the majority of our test readers. Taking into account personal characteristics of our test-readers, which we have surveyed by a questionnaire in our quasi-experimental study, it becomes clear, that the thoughts are evoked by the media content (agenda setting), but shaped by values, attitudes, beliefs etc. of the recipients. The table below show the different reactions of test readers with low and high environmental awareness.

Table 3: Verbalized thoughts of the test-readers on the presented expert statements in relation to environmental awareness.

Environmental awareness	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent	Total
Low	9 (27,3%)	9 (17,2%)	15 (45,5%)	33 (100%)
High	7 (17,9%)	16 (41,0%)	16 (41,0%)	39 (100%)
Total	16 (22,2%)	31 (43,1%)	25 (34,7%)	72 (100%)

Conclusion

Our study on reception processes of media coverage on climate change and coastal protection shows, that recipients actively engage with media content. The media provides interpretations on climate change and coastal protection, which evoke thoughts in recipients. But which kind of thoughts are evoked is to a high degree dependent on characteristics of the recipients and not determined by the media content.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

REPRESENTING SCIENCE EDUCATION IN THE MEDIA: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF EVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND CREATIONIST EXPLANATIONS

Joachim Allgaier

Centre for Science Education, Faculty of Science, Open University. Walton Hall, MILTON KEYNES, MK7 6AA, United Kingdom. Email:

J.Allgaier@open.ac.uk

Abstract

The teaching of evolution theory in schools in several European countries and the USA has been contested by different groups of creationists. These debates have been reported in the media. Media coverage of the debate over whether creationist explanations of the origin of life should be taught in science classes is the subject of this research. The paper focuses on the role of expertise in British newspaper coverage of this issue. The results show that a range of experts were cited in the coverage, and that these experts drew on the rhetoric of science to defend their positions, whether as creationists or evolutionists.

Key Words: Experts, Science Education, Newspaper Coverage

Context

The research in this paper investigates the role of experts in British newspaper coverage about the debate over whether creationist views of the development of life should be taught alongside evolution theory in British schools. Since journalists do not have the time to conduct independent research they often rely on different sources to add illustrating quotes, using expertise to add credibility to their stories. Expert sources can therefore be used for context, legitimation, explication, and balance (Conrad, 1999). Sources that are supposed to be exceptionally credible are representatives of science (Sprecker, 2002). This paper focuses on the role of the scientific expert in this debate. It is argued that the newspaper coverage about controversial issues might have an effect on the public opinion (McCune, 2003).

Objective

An overall objective of this research is to examine the role of experts and expertise in media coverage about the representation of science education in the media; who these experts are, what they say and how they get depicted.

Methods

A sample of 66 articles which reported the debate about whether creationist explanations of the development of life should be included in science lessons were investigated in this research. The articles were examined using qualitative and quantitative methods, in a study of media content. The sample included four British national broadsheets and their Sunday equivalents, two

British mid-market tabloids and their Sunday issues and two British 'red-top' tabloid newspapers and their Sunday issues. Furthermore, two British weekly publications specialising in education issues, were included in the sample. The sample period includes newspapers from Jan 01, 2003 until Feb 20, 2004, inclusive.

The articles were quantified in terms of: their distribution over time, publication, type of journalist (if named) and use of direct quotation of sources. The direct quotes were then extracted for further qualitative analysis based on the description of the experts and the content of the quotes. This categorisation was not decided a priori, but was allowed to emerge from the data and then compared across the entire data set.

Results

The numbers of different sources quoted in the articles according to the pre-established categories can be seen in Figure 1 below. The analysed quotes represent a variety of viewpoints from a range of experts. Amongst the 98 quoted experts, scientists are a frequently quoted group (24.5% of the quoted experts). The only group quoted more often were the professional educationalists (30.6 % of the quoted experts).

The scientific sources are usually described by their name, academic title, their affiliated institution and by their discipline. The prevalent argumentation pattern that is used by the scientists relates primarily to what could be dubbed 'the scientific method'. The majority of the scientists argue against the teaching of creationist explanations in science classes. In many cases the scientists relate to "evidence", "proof" and "experiments" to justify their support for the theory of evolution. For them evolution theory therefore has greater epistemological status when compared to creationist worldviews which they often depict as religious belief. By contrast, when creationist scientists get represented in the coverage the description of these experts often challenges their credibility, especially if these experts are quoted arguing against evolution theory.

Conclusion

In this research the role of expertise in media coverage of a controversial issue was examined. The results suggest that journalists use quotes of different experts in a variety of ways. In particular, scientists are represented as credible sources. These results suggest that the use of sources in this story influences the tone of an article about a controversial issue in two ways. First, by selecting certain quotes and leaving out others (e.g. decontextualising them) journalists represent a mediated view of this debate. Second, by contesting the credibility of an expert in the description of the source that is attached to the quote, journalists frame these experts in particular ways. This affects the perceptions of their argument. Journalists and scientists are themselves located in their own professional cultures. But at the same time all share the grounds of everyday culture and public opinion. This should be taken into consideration when the relationship between media coverage, journalists and scientific experts is examined (Peters, 1999).

References

Conrad, P. (1999). Use of expertise: sources, quotes, and voices in the reporting of genetics in the news. *Public Understanding of Science*, 8, 285 - 302.

McCune, C. A. (2003). Framing Reality: Shaping the News Coverage of the 1996 Tennessee Debate on Teaching Evolution. *Journal of Media and Religion* 2(1), 5 - 28.

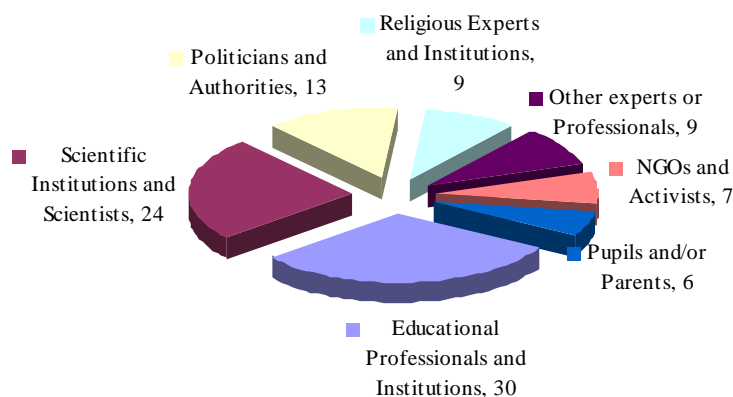
Peters, H. P. (1999). The interaction of journalists and scientific experts. Cooperation and conflict between two professional cultures. In E. Scanlon, E. Whitelegg and S. Yates (Eds).

Communicating Science. Contexts and Channels. (pp. 252 – 269). London and New York, Routledge.

Sprecker, K. (2002). How Involvement, Citation Style, and Funding Source Affect the Credibility of University Scientists. *Science Communication*, 24(1), 72 – 97.

Figures

Figure 1: Quoted Sources in the Articles



The chart shows the distribution of the 98 quoted experts over the seven categories of experts.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press: a cultural question?

POPULAR EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY AS PUBLIC SCIENCE AND BOUNDARY WORK

Angela Cassidy

*Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, University of
Manchester, Maths Tower, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL. Tel: +44-16-1275
5843, Fax: +44-16-1275-5699, Email: angela.cassidy@man.ac.uk*

Abstract

The paper presents findings of a study of the new subject of evolutionary psychology as it appeared in the public domain of the UK in the 1990s. Quantitative and qualitative analyses, alongside research interviews, found that UK broadsheet press coverage of the subject rose throughout the 1990s and peaked in the year 2000, was associated with coverage of popular science books on the subject, and was written by unusual numbers of academics and book authors. I argue that this evidence, alongside material from research interviews, suggests that popular evolutionary psychology is an example of Bucchi's (1996) model of a 'deviation' route in the communication of science, where scientists have used the public domain as a forum to make arguments and reach audiences unavailable through routine forms of academic communication.

Key words: popular science

Text

Background/Methods

Evolutionary psychology (EP) is a new area of research which first appeared in the public domain of the UK media during 1994 and in academic citations in 1989. Evolutionary psychologists, stress the importance looking to our evolutionary origins in understanding modern human psychology, behaviour and cultures. During the mid and late 1990s, the public claims made by evolutionary psychologists were extensively debated on a popular level in the UK, particularly through the publication of many popular science books on the subject, and by the appearance of many academics in the mass media discussing the issues raised by such claims. In this coverage, evolutionary psychology claims were often closely related to discussions of sexual politics, gender difference, and changes in workplace and family roles in recent years.

This paper presents research following the UK press and other media coverage of evolutionary psychology from 1990 until 2002. Press coverage of EP was analysed through searches of electronic archives of broadsheet newspapers, both quantitatively, through content analysis, and qualitatively alongside coverage

from other media and interviews with academics and media professionals. In particular, press coverage of evolutionary psychology was compared directly with that of a related subject in science (articles containing ‘evolved + genetic’) and a related word in more general use (‘Darwinian’) over the same period.

Key Findings

- UK press coverage peaked in 2000 and subsequently dropped away strongly: academic citations were broadly in line with press coverage until this date, whereupon they continued to rise (Figure 1).
- Press coverage of EP was closely associated with that for particular authors around dates of publication, e.g. Robert Wright’s (1995) *The Moral Animal: the New Science of Evolutionary Psychology* (Figure 2).
- ‘Evolutionary psychology’ newspaper articles were authored by more academics/book authors compared to coverage of ‘evolved + genetic’ and ‘Darwinian’. They were also less often written by science journalists than ‘evolved + genetic’ articles were (Figure 3).
- [Darwin@LSE](#) group, from the London School of Economics philosophy of science department, organised a series of public seminars on evolutionary themes 1995-98. EP academics and authors were invited to speak at these; co-ordination with publishers on publicity; very well attended and covered by media. Interviewees were unanimous that [Darwin@LSE](#) played a central role in creating awareness of EP in the UK public domain.
- Strong evidence of interdisciplinary friction around EP arguments: e.g. evolutionary psychologists’ rhetorical attacks on the ‘Standard Social Science Model’ (approaches that ‘ignore’ the role of evolution); arguments against EP often came from sociologists/other psychologists, but also from several biologists. Participants in the debate frequently represented one another as ‘unscientific’.

Conclusions

This study illustrates well the way in which different parts of the UK media can co-ordinate and set one another’s agendas in their coverage of a science like evolutionary psychology, which has little relevance to wider news agendas. In particular, it provides strong evidence of the importance of the 1990s ‘popular science’ boom in publishing for setting the agenda in other media such as the daily press.

I would argue that the evidence presented here is consistent with Massimiano Bucchi's (1996) model of 'deviation processes' in science communication. Bucchi argues that in such cases, scientists appeal to the public domain, frequently working the media themselves, in order to make arguments that cannot be aired via everyday academic communication routes such as journal articles, or to reach audiences outside of their own discipline. Bucchi argues that such episodes are often associated with contest over, or the definition of, disciplinary boundaries in science, and cites examples such as controversy over the asteroid impact hypothesis of the extinction of the dinosaurs.

In the case of popular EP in the UK during the 1990s, a new approach to the evolutionary study of humans sought to distance itself from previous approaches such as Sociobiology, from a marginalised position within the social sciences. Books such as Robert Wright's *The Moral Animal* created awareness of 'the new science' in the public domain, not only through the books themselves, but also through associated coverage in other media, and through the activities of academics and authors themselves to create such coverage, for example by writing book reviews and other articles in the national press. Such moves were then reflected by other academics arguing against evolutionary psychology claims in a similar pattern of popular books and articles. Importantly, my research also suggests that this kind of science 'popularisation' can have important effects in academia itself, adding further supporting evidence for interactionist, rather than dissemination models of science communication.

References

- Bucchi, M (1996) 'When scientists turn to the public: alternative routes in science communication' *Public Understanding of Science*, 5, 375-94.
- Wright, Robert (1994) *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life / Why We Are the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. New York: Pantheon; London: Little, Brown (1995)

Figures

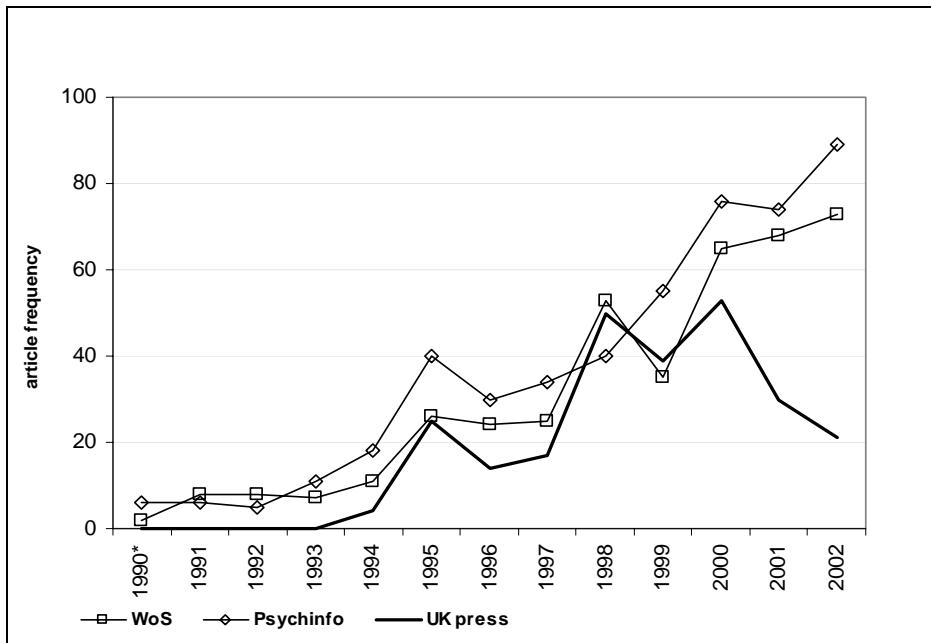


Figure 1: Frequencies of EP articles: academic citation databases; UK broadsheet press

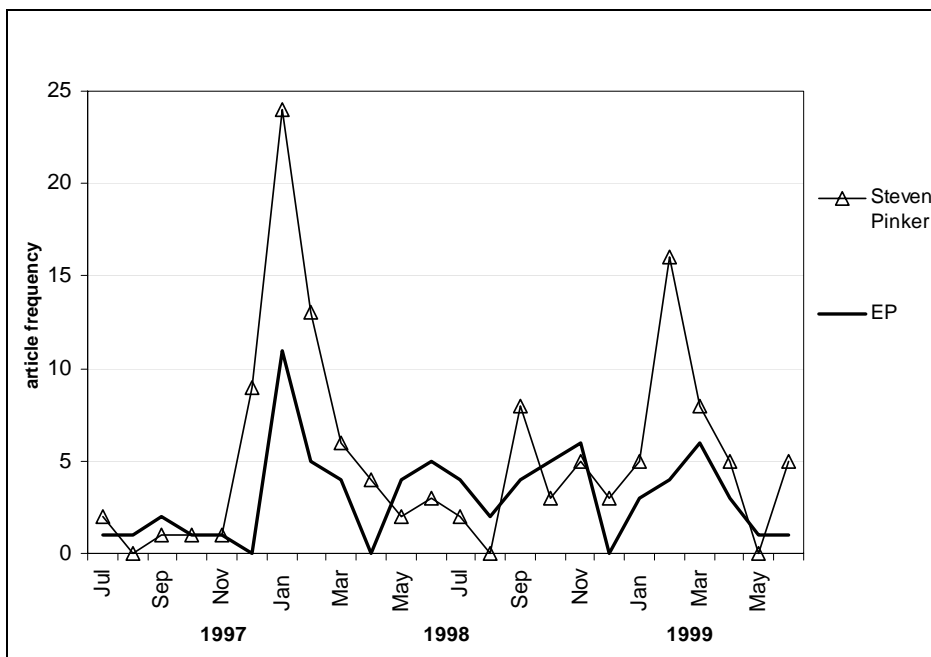


Figure 2: Frequencies of EP press articles; psychologist / author Steven Pinker

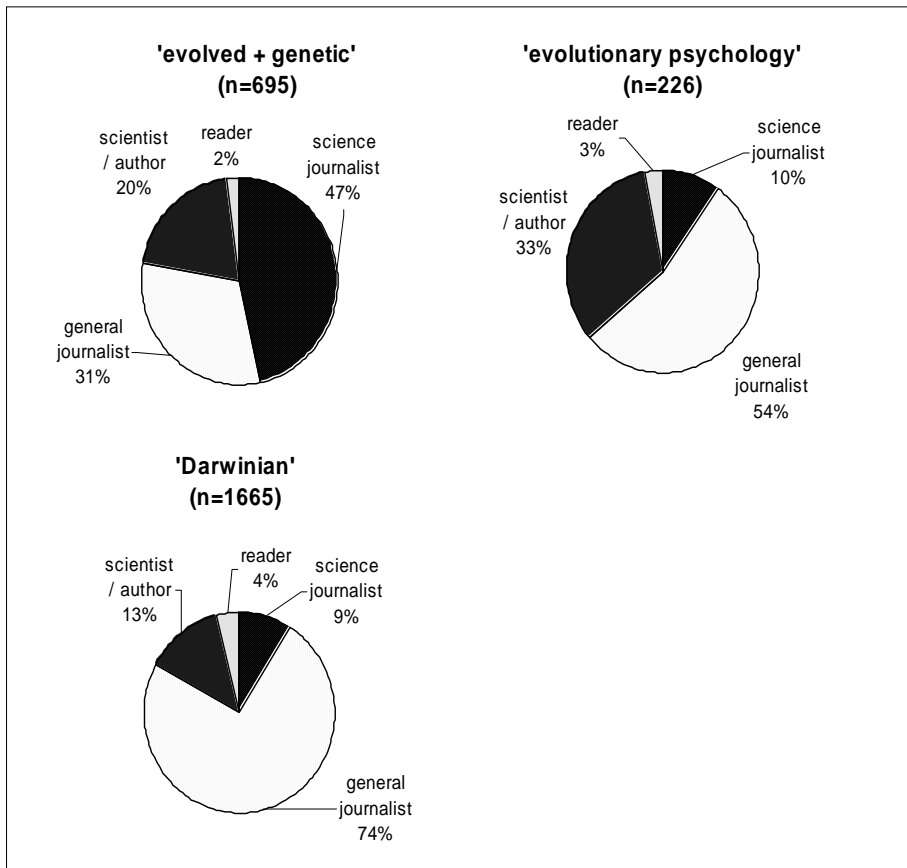


Figure 3: Comparisons of article authors 1990-2001

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

SCIENCE REPORTING IN THE LOCAL PRESS IN GERMANY

¹Markus Lehmkuhl and ²Winfried Göpfert

^{1, 2}Free University Berlin. E-mails: kuhle@zedat.fu-berlin.de,
goepfert@zedat.fu-berlin.de

How does one assess the quality of journalistic science and risk reporting? There have been numerous attempts to find a common basis of assessment by applying different, intersubjectively verifiable methods, but no agreement could be reached so far (Bader 1998; Schanne 1998; Dunwoody; Peters 1992). There is no point denying that journalistic products usually do not fulfill the demand for accuracy a scientist expects his own results to meet. Just as no one would doubt the fact that journalistic constructions of “reality” do not reflect the reality of the scientific result but create their own “media” reality. There is, however, reason to doubt the argument that these deficits of journalism are worth. From the point of view of the doubters though, approaches taken by the representants of accuracy research or methods comparing the reality designs of journalists with those of scientists always reach the same conclusion: When devising its selection criteria journalism refrains from taking into account the relevancy criteria of the system it observes, be it science, economy, politics, or the judicial system. Journalism has to rely on its own criteria, otherwise it becomes a mere ward of science, and ceases to be journalism (Kohring 1997).

As a result, research approaches like the ones mentioned above, which aim at turning journalism into a transmitter of scientific interests, must seem futile. All analysis based on hierarchically comparing the reality concepts of science and journalism, eventually has to end up with the same result: that of the discrepancy between realities and hence the „contortion“ of journalistic reality.

Looking upon the issue from a systems theoretical point of view, one has to ask the question of how journalism can be criticised at all when no criteria deriving from fields other than journalism itself can be applied. The answer that will be given below is easy: Valuable criticism has to be based on the very quality criteria journalism has set up for itself. Guidebooks for journalists at work serve in our study as a source for devising these criteria. This leads to the question, when exactly one of these criteria has to be considered as fulfilled. Judgements cannot simply be based upon a reference value developed in advance, a value providing reliable information on what a well-made news report is or what it has to offer in order to be called complete. Due to the lack of such reference values, our assessments shall be based on the always disputable arguments of the critic. As a result, the information value of the criticism increases and decreases according to the quality of the critic’s arguments. This method basically resembles the approach of literary scientists

investigating the quality of literary texts.

In the following passage I will summarise very shortly the results of our analyse of the news coverage and commentaries on the following four issues as found in 11 local German newspapers: Cloning of Dolly, the nitrofen scandal, BSE, and climate change. Analysis focuses on the science journalistic aspects of the four issues in question.

Our analysis has made partially considerable deficiencies evident. These deficiencies refer to the information depth of the coverage, the ability to comment on and to investigate into events. Regarding the extent of shortcomings, the texts differ considerably. Especially two among the three newspapers from Berlin yielded much better results in terms of quality.

The other papers usually don't succeed in competently explaining events from a science *journalistic* point of view. The papers seem incapable of taking such an approach, which is particularly problematic considering the many dimensions that have to be taken into account when dealing with one of the complicated issues mentioned above. This limited ability of tackling the issues is probably due to the lack of science journalistic competence in editorial staffs. Local newspapers should therefore turn to strengthening science journalistic competence in order to improve their reporting. Considering the redundancies in our findings there is no point in hoping that the incapability of tackling scientific dimensions of issues is limited to the examples analysed in this paper. On the contrary, it is very likely that local newspapers as a rule have big difficulties in dealing with similar thematical dimensions.

What makes the two Berlin-based newspapers outstanding is, firstly, the more sophisticated treatment of issues. And secondly, science for both papers is no longer something to be seen separate from the political or the economical system. Science for them is not a source guaranteeing certainty but something that has to be questioned as well. When the Berliner Zeitung informs its readers on the economic background of the Dolly experiment, it uncovers the ties between economy and science, hereby showing that the quest for truth is not the only driving force of scientific progress but that profit interests also play a role. Here an interesting characteristic of science becomes visible: its partial loss of social detachment (Weingart 2001). The other two papers do not only cover up this trait of science, their coverage even widens the distance between science and other partial systems of society. Science is depicted as a kind of supernatural force, in the case of Dolly even bearing demonical features.

By explaining how limit values come into being the Tagesspiegel gives his readers a glimpse as to the limits of certainty. Introducing the methodical difficulties the paper points out the fact that the production of truths has to come up against limiting factors – a fact that is usually not mentioned at all. To most newspapers, the seal “scientific” suffices to prove a result trustworthy. Never are scientific results put under scrutiny, never do scientists have to justify their opinions, the social detachedness of science remains untouched. What has been proven “scientifically” is automatically trustworthy, seems to be the conviction of all local papers. Their approach to science is

similar to that of an amateur. The editors cultivate a distance to science, because its partial loss could be considered as characteristic of the “scientification” of society. They want to see science in the ivory tower it has left long ago.

References

- Bader, Renate: Media Coverage of Risks – Overviews and Appraisals of the Research Literature: The German Perspective. In: Dies.; Göpfert, Winfried (Ed.): Risikoberichterstattung und Wissenschaftsjournalismus, Stuttgart 1998, pages 23-42.
- Dunwoody, Sharon ; Peters, Hans Peter: Mass media coverage of technological and environmental risks: a survey of research in the United States and Germany. In: Public Understanding of Science, Vol 1, 1992, pages 199-230.
- Kohring, Matthias: Die Funktion des Wissenschaftsjournalismus, Opladen 1997.
- Schanne, Michael: Media Coverage of Risk: A Meta Analysis of 52 Content Analyses. In: Göpfert, Winfried; Bader, Renate: Risikoberichterstattung und Wissenschaftsjournalismus, Stuttgart 1998, pages 53-69.
- Weingart, Peter: Die Stunde der Wahrheit? Zum Verhältnis der Wissenschaft zu Politik, Wirtschaft und Medien in der Wissensgesellschaft, Weilerswist 2001.

Parallel Session 14: Science in the daily press: a cultural question?

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR SCIENCE JOURNALISM:

SARS AS A CASE STUDY TO EXAMINE SCIENTIFIC CONTENTS

Javier Cruz Mena

Dirección General de Divulgación de la Ciencia, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Casita de las Ciencias, edificio anexo a Universum, Circuito Cultural, Ciudad Universitaria. Coyoacán 04510, Distrito Federal, México. Tel: (52 55) 5662 7332, Fax: (52 55) 5665 1552, E-mail: cruzmena@universum.unam.mx

Abstract

Context. Although several attempts to estimate the quality of news have been made, the concept remains ill-defined. To my knowledge, quality criteria for individual pieces of science coverage are still lacking. Here, a few criteria are proposed as an approximation to quality of contents in science journalism.

Purpose. To examine the science contents of the coverage of the SARS epidemic in daily newspapers.

Methodology. Six daily newspapers (*El Universal*, *La Jornada* and *Reforma*, from México; *Le Monde*, from France, *El País*, from Spain, and *The New York Times*, from the U.S.A.) were scanned for their coverage of the onset of the SARS epidemic. Points of information contributing to decision-making processes were recorded, as were the sources (or lack thereof) and argument forming implications.

Results. The quality criteria proposed herein allow the construction of sets of likely decisions by the readers regarding SARS, and of the necessary information points for each decision. On average, only about half of the time was an identifiable source properly quoted. Connections between information points to reproduce arguments were virtually absent in the Mexican coverage.

Conclusion. While they share many of the information points covered by newspapers in Europe and the USA, Mexican dailies limited their coverage to the very mention of this points, often without quoting authorised sources and generally failing to report the reasoning behind the information.

Key words: Science journalism, quality criteria, SARS.

Text

Introduction

While the opening of spaces for the communication of science in the news appears to follow a growing trend, news products may show a lack of scientific content. But this impression is subjective because the concept of “quality”

remains ill-defined in journalism. Reviews by Meyer & Kim (2003) and Thorson (2003) document attempts to estimate quality of news coverage, while Pertilla & Belt (2002) argue that quality is linked to revenue.

The issue of quality goes to the heart of the question of whether (and indeed how) science in the daily press is a cultural matter. Two clichés serve as springboards: i) science is culture; ii) knowledge is power. Thus, science journalism lies at the juncture of the intellectual and the pragmatic, and hence it is valid to ask the question: science journalism, what for? Indeed, Crúz Mena (2003) has argued that if one social purpose of journalism is to help inform the decision-making processes of readers, then one could estimate the quality of individual pieces of science journalism applying this criterion. For instance, Crúz Mena & Bonfil (2003) were able to construct sets of information points to feed reader's decisions regarding the SARS epidemic, the anthrax attacks and the transgenic contamination of corn in México.

Here I argue that to inform decision-making, science coverage ought to report not just on what may be perceived as facts, but also on the reasoning made by scientists to reach those facts.

Results and discussion

SARS was taken as a case study following the WHO's warning on March 12th. A table of likely decisions and corresponding information points has been reported elsewhere (Crúz Mena, 2003). Here we screened the same sample for arguments presented in the form of connections between information points until a logical conclusion is reached. A thorough presentation of results does not fit in this space, but the following example should illustrate the point:

On March 17th, on its first story on SARS, one Mexican newspaper published a photograph showing a Hong Kong patient and relatives, all wearing protective masks and gloves. The note says nothing about the possible source of infection or the ways it may be transmitted. In the days to come, the wearing of masks will be shown and mentioned several times, but always without discussing the rationale or the scientific basis for such practice.

Two days earlier, one of the foreign newspapers accompanied a very similar photograph with a logical sequence. It informed that WHO had observed that most cases occurred among hospital workers, and thus thought that the illness seemed to spread by respiratory droplets. *Then* the note informed of the shipment of masks and gloves.

Trivial though it may appear, the example shows, right from the start, a difference in coverage philosophy between those who feel satisfied with just printing isolated facts and quotations and those who seek to report on the rationale behind the findings themselves. This difference was to be further observed on subjects such as the causal agent, infection routes, clinical treatments and contention strategies, which are longer to discuss and won't fit in this space.

Conclusion

By failing to report on the reasoning behind scientific claims concerning SARS, the Mexican press left its readers no choice but to take the word of the sources solely on the basis of their status as “experts”. The hypothesis that if exposed to accurate reports of the reasoning of these scientists the readers might have been in better position to make decisions concerning SARS seems worthy of further research. Moreover, the reasons which prevented the Mexican press from even attempting this sort of coverage are equally intriguing.

References

- Cruz Mena, J. & Bonfil, M. (2003). Diagnóstico de contenidos del periodismo de ciencia en la prensa escrita. *XV Encuentro Nacional de Investigadores de la Comunicación*, Puebla, México.
- Crúz Mena, J. (2003). Las universidades como fuentes de información científica en crisis sociales: La epidemia de SARS como caso de estudio. *II Reunión Iberoamericana de Comunicación Universitaria*. Veracruz, México. (<http://www.uv.mx/oicu/ponencias/ponencia05.htm>).
- Meyer, P. & Kim, K (2003). Quantifying newspaper quality. *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication*. Kansas City, USA. ([http://www.unc.edu/~pmeyer/Quality Project/quantifying newspaper quality.pdf](http://www.unc.edu/~pmeyer/Quality_Project/quantifying_newspaper_quality.pdf))
- Thorson, E. (2003, April) What 35 years of academic research tells us. Retrieved May 9, 2004, from <http://www.poynter.org>.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

POPULARIZATION OF ECONOMICS THROUGH ARTICLES ABOUT "NEW ECONOMY" IN FRENCH NEWSPAPERS (1999-2000)

Elsa Poupardin

*University Paris 7 Denis Diderot, 1 rue de Bercy 75012 Paris, France. Tel :
01 44 67 01 61. E-mail : elsa.poupardin@wanadoo.fr*

Abstract

The increasing number of articles devoted to economics and especially to the «new economy » between 1999 and 2000 in France raises the question of the vulgarization of economics in the newspapers. We examined five French national daily newspapers, two weekly magazines, and one daily local newspaper between the years 1999 and 2000. We compared the newspapers contents with the articles of vulgarisation on natural science and economics. At last we studied the common points it shares with the hygienist literature of the 19th centuries.

Key Words: Vulgarisation, hygienics, economics

Text

Context: The expression « new economy », which is born in the middle of the 90's in USA had been enormous media in France where it arrived at the end of the decade. Written articles on “new economy” are interesting because they represent a novelty both in terms of numbers and content of articles, then because they reconcile economics and economy describing a utopian world, a new hoped economy¹. We would like to determine to what “genre” these articles belong.

Methodology: We examined five French national daily newspapers (Le Monde, Le Figaro, Libération, L'Humanité, La Croix), two weekly magazines (l'Express, le Point), and one daily local newspaper (Le Parisien) for years 1999 and 2000. We choose to pick all articles where “nouvelle économie” was used in title or in body.

Results: What should be established at the very outset is that their content have many common points with the one of vulgarization articles on natural science.

First of all because they consider economics as equivalent to natural sciences: they quote figures, laws (Metcalf's law, Moore's law etc.) and famous economists, use charts and tables, technical terms, and neologisms. Secondly articles show the same rhetoric as scientific literature of vulgarisation: authors use paraphrases, analogies, metaphors etc., to simplify their account.

This vulgarization is nevertheless peculiar in many ways. In the first place articles on “new economy” and economical vulgarisation differ about three points:

Our articles never mention the whys of their interest in the “new economy”, whereas thirty years ago, every authors would have underscored the absolute necessity of economical vulgarisation. The standardization of the actual economic discourse is also new: two newspapers, as Liberation and Le Figaro which have obvious different political leanings display to us the same subjects, myths and metaphors and the same treatment.

Secondly we can also distinguish our literature on “new economy” from vulgarisation of natural science. To begin with, articles have a conflictual relationship with the science, they are supposed to popularise. Authors denigrate methods and forecasts of the professional economists, underscore that there are no consensus between economists, and put the “heterodox” economists forward. They also present economics as a harmless science (no “mad scientist” here) and which did not make any “progress” for a long time.

Style of articles also clashes with those of vulgarisation being quite normative: They often take form of advice and above all recommend action. They are also “oriented” and peremptory, using assertions, appreciations and questionable relationship of cause and effect to describe facts.

Theses particularities lead us to suppose that a comparison with the hygienist literature of the 19th would be appropriate. The historical links between the two genres tend to confirm this hypothesis.ⁱⁱ

The role of scientists in the two literatures is very close: he has to inform and convince the politics in order to make laws and to take decisions for people. He is the only one able to fix the system (economical or medical) and he has a responsibility toward the future that he has to improve for next generations. He is also often judged responsible in case of crisisⁱⁱⁱ

In addition the literatures of vulgarisation in hygienics or economics have the same goal: to prevent the crisis, describe the first symptom of illness. They both over and above that used the same analogies and metaphors as those around mechanics. The body is thought in terms of circuit, pump, flow, belt, lever etc. as the country was describe in our articles.

Conclusion: The study of the press on new economy reveals possibly an explanation to the joint “rebellion” of the economic student about the teaching of the discipline and the blossoming of the anti-globalisation movement in France. The augmentation of the number of economical articles and the lost of the aura surrounding economics could be taken to mean that articles revealed to readers the domination of the neoclassic theory in the public discourse and cast doubt on the legitimacy of this omnipresence.

The comparison with hygienist literature is interesting in that it lighten the links between authors, publics and scientist in these articles. Journalists seem to have a low opinion of the level of economical knowledge of their readers, they put a matter of life and death in the comprehension and knowledge of economics, and for them, economists as doctors are working for the sake of mankind. An interesting paradox lays nonetheless in the contradiction of their respective contents: promote or discourage public intervention in private life.

Notes

ⁱ : « économie » has in French the two meanings of « economics » or « economy »

ii cf. how hygienics has economical preoccupations and how it was often connected to economical sections in scientific societies in Bourdelais Patrice (ed) (2001).

iii cf the case of cholera epidemic in Paris in Ramsey Matthew. Mouvement anti-hygiénistes et libéralisme : vers une histoire comparée. In Bourdelais Patrice (ed) (2001) or french articles in newspaers about the e-Krach in april 2000.

References:

Bourdelais, Patrice (ed) (2001). Les hygiénistes : enjeux, modèles et pratique, Belin 2001.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

DESIGN OF A STUDY ON THE COVERAGE OF SCIENCE NEWS IN SPANISH-WRITING NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA AND CREATION OF A LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF SCIENCE NEWS STUDIES

Raimundo Roberts,

Scientific Communication Observatory. University Pompeu Fabra, Rambla 30 – 32, 08002, Barcelona, Spain. Tel: +34-93-542-2446, E-mail: raimundo.roberts@upf.edu

Abstract

The goal of this proposal is to improve the information about scientific information in newspapers in Latin America. This will abolish the lack of data about the coverage of science and medicine in the newspapers of mayor countries in this region. To run this project, we propose to use the methodologies of "Informe Quiral", an annual study of five major newspapers published in Spain, and developed by Scientific Communication Observatory at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain.

We want to present and discuss this project for the study of scientific news in the Latin American press with others journalists and researchers, and also, involve them in the proposed project by creating a network to develop this study, and to continue monitoring these sources of information on a long-term basis.

Text

Politics that is oriented to works an integral development of the society, in countries with different levels of development, will benefit it from the investment in education and science, which is fundamental for the progress.

Vladimir of Semir says, "Precisely, when we are in an economic and social process of transformation towards new forms of living together in many aspects of our society, it is very important that the citizens possess the capacity to adapt, because the technological and scientific culture forms part of their daily routine"(1).

From this point of view, the reflection of science in the "public space" trough the media is one of the key elements for its diffusion and social acceptance, besides it should be included in the priority list of the "policy-makers". Science, as well as technology, supposes the creation of knowledge that can and should be applied in order to have a social repercussion. To make this process effective, it is necessary to create a "virtuous circle", formed by the public exposure of the scientific local or international efforts, a strong position of an informed society and a political prioritization of activities, which are directed to the creation and diffusion of the knowledge.

Similar antecedents of studies at an European level exist, like the one carried out by Holliman (5), on the study of newspapers in five European countries, and presented at the PCST Conference of Cape Town, South Africa, in 2002,

or the Informe Quiral (2) that have shown to be a useful source of a large quantity of information.

Objectives

The proposal of the OCC that we present consists of the execution of a study on the scientific or medical news, in newspapers in various countries of Latin America. In addition, we propose the creation of a network of studies on scientific news, having emerged from this study.

Methodology:

To study the evolution of the published issues in a specific part of the society, the OCC has implemented a study tool: the Informe Quiral. This study is carried out annually since 1996, and maintains since 1997 the same methodology. This permits us to successfully study the specific development of subjects, especially those of sanitary interest, in a concrete “public space” circumscribed to the newspapers. The Informe Quiral has been able to establish a stable substrate of objective data on the journalistic information in media of greater credibility: the newspapers.

The Informe Quiral has as a like objective the systematic monitorization and the analysis of published texts in the five daily newspapers of greater diffusion in Spain, in relation to health, and medicine and the health. The monitorization of these media is carried out from the material communicated to the readers, through the systematic harvesting of all the information on medicine and health that have been published. From these data, we obtain sufficient information to analyze the most important issues of the year and to understand the structures to produce journalistic information, the ones that determine the form and the fund of what the readers receive daily through the newspapers.

Through the studies carried out in the Informe Quiral, we have been able to establish the evolution of the sanitary themes of an information media group of great coverage, credibility, and with a great impact in the public space, that influences the politicians and the “policy-makers”. The collected data by this publication have been delivered to sanitary decision-makers, and the specialized journalists. Besides, we can affirm that it is a suitable tool of monitoring themes that permits to obtain data and to analyze the “reality” of a specific sector.

The general methodology of analysis of the Informe Quiral is based on the guidelines that are described by Krippendorff (3) for the study of the content in the media and the indicators utilized by Burns et.al. in 1995 (4).

We propose to apply this methodology in different Hispanic countries, to discover who the protagonists of information are, and which are the themes that show more interest in the media. In this way, we propose to establish an international basic study, with the same methodology that we have already tested, on the information that the Hispano-American societies receive in the field of science and medicine.

Results expected

The results expected of this investigation can be extrapolated from the ones obtained by the Informe Quiral. In first place, have the classification of the

analyzed journalistic texts and, secondly, to have a tool to compare newspapers in different regions or countries.

Furthermore, we would like to analyze and expose in what way the scientific issues are treated in the press, to explain journalistically the professional work of who reports and to stimulate the objective values in scientific communication. On the other hand, it will be possible to determine the themes that most interest have caused and most news have generated in the press, to analyze quantitatively the most important themes, and to carry out a qualitative analysis of the cases that have caused most impact.

In a second phase, we expect that this study will permit us to obtain reliable data to observe the evolution of the journalistic working processes of the themes that more impact have shown.

Also, is viable to monitor and to make comparisons of the development of the scientific journalism in each country of the study. This would be possible thanks to the creation, on one side, of an extensive database that would permit the execution of different studies on the state of science and the scientific journalism, like the one carried out by Revuelta et. al. (6). On the other side, it will permit an exhaustive study on the issues, protagonists and informative flows of the main media of communication.

Referentes

Book

(3) KRIPPENDORFF K (1990).: "Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology" (8ª edición), Londres, Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

INFORME QUIRAL (1996-2002).. Annual report. Barcelona: Univ. Pompeu Fabra. 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

Journal article

(4) BURNS, R.B. ET AL. (1995). "Newspaper reporting of the medical literature", J Gen Intern Med; 10: 19-24.

(6) REVUELTA ET, AL. (2004), "Newspaper Coverage of Health and Medical Issues: a Five-Year Longitudinal Monitoring of Press content", Public Understanding of science (in process).

Conference Proceedings

(5) Holliman, R., Trench, B., Fahy, D., Basedas, I., Revuelta, G., Lederbogen, U., Poupardin, E. (2002). 'Science in the news: a cross-cultural study of newspapers in five European countries'. Paper presented at the 7th International Public Communication of Science and Technology conference Science Communication in a Diverse World, Cape Town, South Africa, December. Available online at: <http://www.fest.org.za/pcst/papers/papers/holliman1.pdf>

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

THE IMPACT OF SOCIO/CULTURAL HERITAGE ON MEDIA PERCEPTION OF SCIENCE IN CROATIA

Blanka Jergovic¹ & Mladen Juracic²

¹University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT UK,
b.jergovic@hrt.hr

²University of Zagreb, Zvonimirova 8, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia,
mjuracic@geol.pmf.hr

Abstract

The impact of the socio/cultural heritage on media perception of science in Croatia is very strong, traditionally and after political changes in 1990.

The method of content analysis of Croatian newspapers is used, and comparison with indicators of socio/political assessment of importance of science (allocation for science and higher education, statements of high state officials, incomes in science etc) has been done. Results indicate that media perception of science highly depends on place of science in society defined by socio/cultural heritage.

Key Words: media, science, Croatia

Context

Political changes in Croatia in 1990 did not introduce immediate development of democracy and economic and social prosperity, as well as expected flourishing of science. Results of science policy changes are delayed. Therefore the beginning of 1990-ies still reflected negative science policy of the former Yugoslav state. In 1965, according to its scientific activity, Croatia shared similar position with Austria, Spain, Finland, Norway, Czech Republic and Hungary, and was more advanced than Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Romania. Now Croatia shares the latest positions with Portugal and Romania (Šlaus, 1998, 39). The same negative science policy, that started with tightening of totalitarianism after so called 'Croatian Spring' (failed attempt to introduce political and economic changes in Croatia in 1971), continued. As a result the share of Croatian scientists in world science production has fallen from 0,08% in 1990 to 0,053% in 1994. Croatia was on 53 position in the world, measured by ISI indicators, among 178 countries, between 1998-2002. Compared to the new 10 members in the EU, Croatia is following Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, and is better than Estonia, Latvia, Leetonia, Malta and Cyprus.

The percentage of GDP for science is 0,55. Having approximately 10.000 registered scientists this makes €14.848 per capita.

The coverage of science in Croatian media traditionally follows the importance of the events. The most extensive coverage has daily broadsheet *Vjesnik*, having also special pages on science. Other newspapers cover science in accordance to their perception of importance of events and prominence of scientists.

Objectives and Methods

The aim of this research was to compare the importance of science in society and in media, and to find out possible correlation inbetween. Indicators of importance of science in society are quantitative (financing) and qualitative (development strategies), whereas in media these are: number, layout and extent of articles (quantitative), and comprehensibility (qualitative). It included content analysis (397 articles: 298 in 2001 (214 high educating, 79 science), 64 from June 2002 and 35 from October 2003), open interviews with science journalists and editors, and comparison.

Results

Since Croatian independence in 1991, its declared priorities were knowledge and science, and its paragons were Ireland and Finland. However, opposing statements were present: *e.g.* president Tudman's (1991-1999) about "genetically predetermined Croats", intellectuals as traitors and hirelings financed by foreign trusts (Soros etc); or one of pre-eminent former ruling party members (Ivan Milas in Parliament) about brain value of 2 DM. Today, there are no such statements, and science and education is, according to the budgetary funding, fourth most important sector. Share for science and research from 0,6-0,9% in 1990-1998 (Šlaus, 1998, 38) arrived to 1,19% in 2004 (Švarc et al., 2004), indicating that importance of science and research has been recognized in Croatia.

Croatian newspapers since formation of stable readership in second part of the 19th century are important part of the political life and depend on politics (Jergović, 2000, 82). This is felt up to now. During the socialist regime, as a whole society, science was atomized. The interaction science-citizenship was substituted with science-politics interaction (Šlaus, 1998, 37). The result was obvious in printed media. After radical political changes in 1990, following the change of political agenda (war, current political events, restoration...) newspapers during 90ies introduced science topics. In 1996 *Vjesnik* introduces science section.

Articles on science are mainly of medium size (29%) or large (38%); mostly have medium (47%) or large headlines (38%) and photographs (62%). Almost 100% of analyzed articles are easy comprehensible. Sensationalism in divergence between headlines and article content is not present. Science is not ghettoised: *Vjesnik*, which only has science section covers science also on daily base and in supplements. However, articles published in *Science*, *Life* and similar sections are more prominent respecting size and layout. The weakest point is number of articles – average 1,5 daily, and on 'Croatian' science 0,8.

Conclusions

Media perception of science in Croatia follows its political perception. However, recent changes of importance of science in society (better financing, positive attitude of politicians toward science) are still not felt in media, characterized by poor interest in science, strong predominance of natural sciences, exclusive authorship of journalists (scientists write mostly in *Letters to editor*). More attractive articles in sections *Science* or *Life* suggest higher importance. This, notwithstanding meagre ghettoisation of science into sections, indicates that science is not important in other spheres of life (especially technical, social sciences, humanities). In favour of this conclusion goes also the indicated indifferentness of Croatian publics towards science (Polšek, 1998, 227-233).

References

- Šlaus, I. (1998). Prilog raspravi o društvenoj procjeni znanosti. In D. Polšek (Ed.) *Vidljiva i nevidljiva akademija* (pp.33-45). Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb.
- Švarc, J. Lažnjak, J. Šporer, Ž. (eds.) (2004). Transition countries in the knowledge-based society: Socioeconomic reflections, Institute "Ivo Pilar", Zagreb and University of South Australia, Adelaide, *in print*.
- Jergović, B. (2000). Demokratske promjene i tisak u Hrvatskoj 1990-2000., Faculty of Political Sciences, Zagreb.
- Polšek, D. (1998). Stavovi javnosti prema znanosti i znanstvenom razvoju u Hrvatskoj. In D. Polšek (Ed.) *Vidljiva i nevidljiva akademija* (pp.227-233). Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

INTERPRETING SCIENCE NEWS: MEDIA TEMPLATES AND SCIENTIFIC CITIZENSHIP

Richard Holliman

*Centre for Science Education, Faculty of Science, Open University, Walton Hall, MILTON KEYNES, MK7 6AA, U.K.
Email: R.M.Holliman@open.ac.uk*

Abstract

Reception studies of news media coverage of science are interesting for science communication researchers because science news is a key site for disseminating newly-published scientific information. This paper briefly considers some of the results from 32 focus group interviews that examined how participants interpreted news reporting of a range of scientific issues. The results indicate that participants remembered key events in the coverage, that they were media literate and that they had well-formed opinions regarding these scientific issues. In conclusion, the paper considers the relationship between the (re)construction of media templates of science and scientific citizenship.

Key words: Communication, Media and Public Opinion

Text

Context

The research discussed in this paper is situated within debates about media templates and scientific citizenship. Starting from the premise that audiences are heterogeneous and that audience members are active (de Cheveigné and Véron, 1996), this research is informed by Kitzinger's (2000) discussion of media templates. She argues that:

Media templates are a crucial site of media power, acting to provide context for new events, serving as foci for new demands for policy change and helping to shape the ways in which we make sense of the world. [In this way media templates act as] rhetorical shorthand, helping journalists and audiences to make sense of fresh news stories. (Ibid. p. 81, 61)

Moreover, this paper starts from the premise that audience members will interpret and contextualise media reporting in terms of their prior knowledge, experiences, attitudes and beliefs; in other words, in terms of their scientific citizenship (see Irwin and Michael (2003) for discussion).

Objective

The key objective is to investigate the relationship between media templates for news reporting of newly-published science and scientific citizenship.

Methods

Thirty-two focus groups were conducted to investigate how participants interpreted and contextualised news media coverage of four scientific issues: the cloning of sheep (Holliman, 2004); whether analysis of a meteorite provided evidence of ancient bacterial life-forms that could demonstrate primitive life had once existed on Mars (Holliman, 1999); Gulf War syndrome (Holliman, 2000); and genetic explanations for intelligence and sexuality.

The groups were drawn from a structured sample of pre-existing groups so that participants could discuss these issues in a relaxing and supportive environment (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). Groups were chosen to reflect those who were perceived to have a particular interest in the scientific issue for discussion (e.g. scientists, or trainee journalists) and those without a perceived interest (e.g. office workers).

Data collection involved quantitative and qualitative methods, including individually completed pre- and post-group questionnaires, a group activity where participants produced news artefacts using stimulus materials derived from content analyses of the scientific issues under consideration, and a general discussion led by the group moderator (see Holliman, in press for a description of methods). The group activity and discussion were tape recorded and transcribed, and field notes were taken to record the use of stimulus materials and non-verbal communication.

Results

The results discussed here examine the group interaction during the production of the news artefacts and the discussion that followed. These results suggest that, when compared to analyses of production and content for the same scientific issues (e.g., see Holliman, 2000), the groups' news artefacts represented similar language and visuals, and key events and framing.

Participants were media literate and capable of reproducing, but also critically evaluating media templates for these issues. For example, following the production of their news artefacts, which reflected key issues from the actual coverage, participants often challenged both these artefacts and media reporting. In effect, these participants demonstrated awareness of the socially constructed nature of science news, drawing on their prior knowledge, experience, attitudes and beliefs of both science and the media to support their arguments.

Conclusions

The experiences of conducting focus groups discussed in this paper have investigated the relationship between media templates for a range of scientific

issues and the (re)construction of scientific citizenship. In conclusion, the results suggest that participants were critical consumers of media templates for science. These participants had a reflexive understanding of the media templates for these scientific issues that both drew on and informed their scientific citizenship.

In reflecting on the topic of 'science in the daily press: a cultural question', science communication researchers can explore the diversity in how audience members come to make sense of science reporting in the context of their everyday lives. In so doing, researchers should consider how audience members interpret and contextualise both science *and* the media. Ideas about media templates and scientific citizenship could be useful concepts in this respect, facilitating systematic research into these issues.

References

- de Cheveigné, S. and Véron, E. (1996). Science on TV: forms and reception of science programmes on French television. *Public Understanding of Science* 5(3), 231–253.
- Holliman, R. (In press). Reception analyses of science news: Evaluating focus groups as a method. *Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale*.
- Holliman, R. (2004). Media coverage of cloning: a study of media content, production and reception. *Public Understanding of Science*, 13(2), in press.
- Holliman, R. (2000). Representing science in the UK news media: "Life on Mars?", cell nucleus replacement and Gulf War syndrome. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. *Faculty of Social Sciences*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
- Holliman, R. (1999). Public affairs media and the coverage of "life on Mars?" In Scanlon, E., Whitelegg, E., and Yates, S. (Eds.) *Communicating science: Contexts and channels* (pp. 270-86). London: Routledge.
- Irwin, A. and Michael, M. (2003). *Science, social theory and public knowledge*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kitzinger, J. (2000). Media templates: patterns of association and the (re)construction of meaning over time. *Media, Culture and Society*, 22(1), 61-84.
- Kitzinger, J. and Barbour, R. (1999). Introduction: the challenge and promise of focus groups. In Barbour, R. and Kitzinger, J. (Eds.) *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 1-20). London: Sage.

Parallel Session 14: Science in daily press; a cultural question?

DEMOGRAPHY AND MEDIA

Bassani Marina

ICS, Laboratorio Interdisciplinare-Scuola internazionale Superiore Studi Avanzati S.I.S.S.A., Trieste (Italy)

Abstract

In the last decades demography has confirmed a particular disciplinary habitus, which entails collaboration with public bodies concerned with social policies and a broad opening towards a non-specialist public. Our project on demographic communication in the Italian national press and the survey conducted within the community of Italian demographers are both geared towards shedding light on demographic divulgation, on the arguments and linguistic codes that communicators and demographers address to the public in general, as interaction between science and society. Rather than a 'hypercritical' consideration on the risk of popularisation, we are dealing with a hypothesis of 'reflection' on profession as social scientists.